

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Environment

### **Alliance supports proposed changes to environmental assessment regulations**

#### **Changes to approval process would speed transit construction**

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The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario supports proposed changes to the municipal environmental assessment process because it would both streamline the process and get projects started more quickly.

"We would be able to get shovels into the ground faster," explains Andy Manahan, RCCAO executive director. "We think the proposed amendment would really streamline the environmental assessment (EA) process."

The Municipal Engineers Association recently completed an environmental study report recommending the Municipal Class EA to include municipal transit projects.

It currently includes roads, water and wastewater infrastructure projects but not municipal transit projects.

A separate, individual environmental assessment is required for municipal transit projects and this process can be lengthy. Manahan notes it took three years to complete the EA process for the proposed Spadina subway extension in Toronto.

Under the current EA process, three-year waits are not uncommon, adds Manahan.

Incorporating municipal transit projects, with the same process for other core municipal infrastructure, would allow for quicker construction start times for projects such as renovations to, or new, stations and park-and-ride lots. The only projects not recommended to be included are heavy rail projects such as subways.

A change to the municipal EA process was a recommended change in an RCCAO's 2006 commissioned report on GTA gridlock, notes Manahan.

“The environmental assessment process has become one of the surest means of ensuring that nothing gets done,” the report stated. “The provincial government should streamline the process to reduce costs and accelerate decision-making.”